

US Census (2004), estimated number of cases of open angle glaucoma in North Carolina's population, age 40 and older is 69,683. Glaucoma affects almost 2.3 million Americans age 40 and older, or about 1.9% of the population. Glaucoma prevalence is clearly related to age and race. Glaucoma is more common in Blacks, Hispanics and with increasing age.

US Census (2004) estimated number of cases of age-related macular degeneration in North Carolina's population age 50 and older is 56,515. Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is a condition that primarily affects the part of the retina responsible for sharp central vision. Over 2 million Americans age 50 and older have late AMD. Age-specific prevalence rates are initially comparable between races, but advance more significantly for Whites after age 75. In Blacks, the disease is more prevalent in women until about age 75 as well. Because the data are lacking for Hispanics and other races, the rates given for these populations are an arithmetic average of the rates for Whites and Blacks.

The rate of entry of SSI recipients, who are blind and disabled, regardless of age, increased in the late 1980s and especially in the early 1990s. Figure 4 above shows that population growth and a changing age distribution cannot explain all of the growth of the SSI program, especially the notable increases in the early 90s. It is likely that increased incidence of individuals receiving disability were influenced by other factors, perhaps including the recession present in the early 90s.